

# Jamaica:

## Strengthening Multisectoral Coordination for Youth

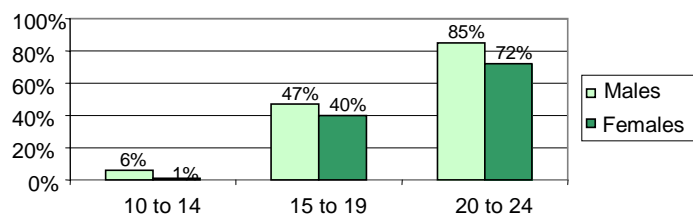
Many advocates for youth programs emphasize a multisectoral approach that includes actors from the government, civil society, and the private sector and that cuts across education, health, and other areas of concern to youth. However, the youth ministries or national youth councils that are the natural focal points for leading a multisectoral effort are typically underfunded, short-staffed, and have limited influence. This policy brief describes the efforts in Jamaica to strengthen multisectoral coordination on youth issues. A nationally inclusive process, led largely by young people from the National Centre for Youth Development, produced a revised national youth policy and drafted a national strategic plan for youth development.

### Youth in Jamaica

Total population, all ages	2.6 million
Population ages 10–24	28%
Gross national income in purchasing power parity (GNI PPP) per person	\$3,490
Human Development Index rank	78
Average births per woman	2.4
Teen pregnancy rate	112 per 1,000
Infant death rate	24 per 1,000
Secondary school enrollment (M/F)	82/85%
Women 15–49 using any contraception	66%
Sexually active youth 15–24	
using contraception (M/F)	80/71%
HIV/AIDS youth prevalence (M/F)	.82/.85%
Median age at first intercourse (F)	17.3 years

Sources available on request from the POLICY Project

**Percent of Jamaican Youth Who Are Currently Sexually Active, by Sex and Age Group, 1997**



Source: Situation Assessment Report: Youth in Jamaica 2001

### The Status of Youth in Jamaica

In some important respects, Jamaican youth today are better off compared with previous generations. They are better educated, more knowledgeable about and more likely to use contraception, and less likely to use drugs. At the same time, youth unemployment rates are high, and young people continue to practice sexual behaviors that put them at risk for unwanted pregnancy and disease.

One result is an adolescent fertility rate of 112 per 1,000, which is the highest of any nation in the Caribbean. Furthermore, young people are disproportionately the perpetrators and victims of violence. Important differences also exist between the status of young men and young women. For example, boys lag behind girls in school attainment, but girls are more at risk of early and unwanted sexual activity.

## Policy and Program Environment

Acknowledging the special needs of youth, the government of Jamaica approved a comprehensive national youth policy in 1994. To enhance implementation of the policy, the government created the National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD) in November 2000. The NCYD's mandate is to provide multisectoral coordination among various government and nongovernmental agencies to fulfill youth development objectives. As part of this coordination effort, the NCYD (now a part of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture) provides technical assistance in research, policy development, and information dissemination to youth and to organizations serving youth.

At the time the NCYD was created, many program efforts already targeted youth but such efforts needed strengthening and expansion. Youth advocates believed a multisectoral response was the most efficient way to address youth concerns, and the focus of the NCYD's activities became strengthening this multisectoral response through coordination and collaboration among Jamaica's many youth-serving organizations.

### 2004 Jamaican National Youth Policy, Focal Area on Health

**Goal:** To foster an environment where young people embrace healthy lifestyles and enjoy optimum physical and mental health

#### **Priority Groups:**

- Youth at risk of early pregnancy, substance misuse, HIV and other STIs
- Younger and underserved rural youth
- Youth in institutional care

#### **Strategic Objectives:**

- To promote the provision of quality information to young persons on healthy life styles, including alternatives to risky behaviors such as drug use and multiple sexual partners
- To increase access to and use of quality youth-friendly health services
- To advocate for development of national legislation to foster positive health outcomes

## Recent Advances in Policy Formulation and Implementation

The NCYD has assumed a leading role in multisectoral coordination on two recent major policy thrusts: revising the national youth policy and developing a national strategic plan for youth development.

**Revision of the 1994 National Youth Policy.** To guide the process of revising the national policy, in 2001 the NCYD established a National Steering Committee with representatives from more than 30 organizations. The committee met monthly to discuss and review the policy revision process, which was further informed by a series of consultations with youth and youth-serving organization across Jamaica. In mid-2004, the Jamaican cabinet approved the policy and sent it to Parliament for consideration. Passage by Parliament would enhance the prospects for the policy to remain in effect beyond the current government.

The revised national youth policy articulates the importance of planning for the development of Jamaica's human resources from birth onward; defines a common vision and framework for youth development; articulates the roles and responsibilities of youth in their personal and national development; and serves as a tool for advocating on youth development issues.

**Strategic planning.** The NCYD has been spearheading the development of a national strategic plan for youth development based on the tenets of the youth policy. The plan will define how to achieve the policy goals, establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, estimate implementation costs, identify sources of funding, and set a timeline. A series of sectoral consultations that brought together youth and youth-serving

organizations from across the country framed the development of the strategic plan. These consultations drew on a situation assessment and a youth programmatic inventory carried out by the NCYD.

The national youth policy and the national strategic planning process complement other POLICY Project-supported work to improve youth reproductive health in Jamaica. For example, POLICY is currently strengthening plans for implementation of reproductive health programs at the parish (local) level in Jamaica and is supporting efforts to more equitably allocate resources at the regional and parish levels. POLICY also works with national and regional health authorities to disseminate the National Strategic Framework for Reproductive Health within the Family Health Program, 2000–2005, and to ensure that regional and parish workplans are consistent with the framework and developed in a participatory manner.

## Lessons Learned

**Youth can lead.** The young but capable NCYD staff quickly moved forward with policy revision and development of the strategic plan. In a relatively short time, the NCYD has become an effective organization that can provide important input and guidance.

**Involving a broad range of stakeholders, especially youth, is important.** The NCYD's coordination effort involved a broad range of stakeholders including international and local donor organizations, youth, and youth-serving organizations in both the public and private sectors. Youth participation has brought greater legitimacy to the policymaking process and to the role of the NCYD.

### A Politician's Viewpoint

*The National Youth Policy represents the government of Jamaica's genuine commitment to place on the agenda, issues, programs, and projects relating to youth. It reflects the work of hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals who have labored diligently for almost two years to produce a document, which will guide youth development programs. The inherent proposals are not a panacea for all the challenges, which we presently face, but will act as a compass to give direction to the way forward at this critical time in our nation's history.* Donald Rhodd, Minister of State, Minister of Education, Youth, and Culture, Jamaica

**Information is key.** The process benefited from good information on youth and on youth activities. The situation assessment provided a baseline for the current level of youth development and highlighted vital social and environmental factors that affect youths' needs and abilities. The NCYD will be able to use the assessment to track risk trends, and monitor positive advances in youth development. The programmatic inventory gave the NCYD and other agencies an up-to-date overview of active youth-serving organizations in Jamaica, including information on organizational structure and staffing, types of programs offered to adolescents and young people, total numbers of young people served, and sources and levels of funding.

**Multisectoral coordination is challenging.** NCYD's coordination was costly and time-consuming. A dynamic process, coordination required a goal and a final product. It also meant a frequent re-examination and redefinition of the process and goals. The youthful staff of the NCYD needed extensive technical support. The sustained commitment of the staff and other stakeholders was key to effective coordination.

In the four years since its establishment, the NCYD led a complex and lengthy process of policy revision and strategy development, successfully using information from a situation assessment, youth programmatic inventory, and other studies. This strengthened multisectoral coordination forms the basis for accelerating efforts to enhance youth development in Jamaica.

## Sources

This brief draws on a number of documents including:

- *Situation Assessment Report: Youth in Jamaica 2001*
- *Adolescent and Youth-Serving Organisations in Jamaica: Results from the Youth Programmatic Inventory Survey of the National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD) Youth Programmatic Inventory*
- *Youth in Jamaica: Meeting their Development Needs*
- *Jamaica National Youth Policy*

Most of these documents are available on the POLICY Project website, [www.policyproject.com](http://www.policyproject.com). For more information, visit the NCYD website at <http://www.moec.gov.jm/youth/index.htm>, or contact the POLICY Project at [yrh@policyproject.com](mailto:yrh@policyproject.com). Visit our youth reproductive health policy website at [www.youth-policy.com](http://www.youth-policy.com) for full-text youth reproductive health policies and other related tools and information.

## About the *Country Brief Series*

This series highlights experiences in advancing adolescent reproductive health policy in developing countries, specifically in those countries where the POLICY Project has been an active partner in policy change. James E. Rosen and Pam Pine prepared this brief under the direction of Nancy Murray, head of the POLICY Project's Adolescent Working Group. We are grateful to the reviewers of earlier versions. To see other briefs in this series, go to [www.policyproject.com](http://www.policyproject.com).

## About the POLICY Project

The POLICY Project works with developing country governments and civil society organizations to promote a more supportive policy environment for family planning/reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and maternal health programs and services. The POLICY Project is funded by USAID under Contract No. HRN-C-00-00-00006-00. POLICY is implemented by Futures Group in collaboration with the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Research Triangle Institute (RTI).



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